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Current Opinion

The Autocracy of the Pew

In the *International Quarterly* for January, 1905, Professor Hyslop, of Columbia University, discusses "Philosophy and Modern Life" in a way that can hardly please the teachers of philosophy. Professor Hyslop insists rather pointedly that philosophy is not wanted by the scientist, and is scouted by the man of religion, unless it substantiates his own beliefs. The transition is easy from this jeremiad over philosophy to one over the limitation of the preacher. "The parishoner," says Professor Hyslop, "asks his pastor to teach him the gospel, and then holds the pursestrings as a check against being told what he does not like." It is a striking sentence, is it not? But is it true? Most people not in sympathy with the churches undoubtedly believe so. And there certainly is enough basis of truth in the statement to cause anxiety. For it cannot be denied that the dependence of many, if not most, pastors upon the favor of their parishoners compels them to conform in too large a degree to the theological prejudices of men and women who, however successful in their own fields of activity, can and do think little about theological matters. Religious teaching is undoubtedly freer today than ever before, but it is far enough from being free. This is one reason why more exceptional men do not become ministers. As layman one not only is free himself, but he can to a considerable degree dictate what his teachers shall teach him!

Yet this is only one side of the matter, one should always remember. There is an increasing number of men in the ministry who will submit to no dictation from those whom they are endeavoring to instruct. They are prophets rather than co-operatively supported private chaplains. In their minds commercial success is not synonymous with theological omniscience. And it is these men—some of whom are likely to be modern martyrs—who are the hope of the church of tomorrow.

The New Interest in the Resurrection

Interest in the resurrection of Jesus is perennial, but of late it has extended to the reviews. In the *Journal of Religious Psychology*, in the *Hibbert Journal*, in the *Nineteenth Century*, and in the *Contemporary Review*, not to mention others, are articles dealing either directly or indi-

rectly with the matter. And the interesting fact is that men are treating the subject seriously—some favorably, others otherwise, but always seriously. In the light of these papers it is a far cry back to the arrogant denials and equally arrogant defense of a generation ago. Thanks to psychologists and psychical research, we are getting to see that immortality is a scientific as well as a purely religious matter; and, what is more, we are coming to see that religion itself is not altogether outside the limits of scientific investigation. Unless we altogether mistake, this attitude of mind is to have a great influence in supplementing other theological and biblical movements toward a new era of positive rather than metaphysical Christian faith. It is to be hoped that it will not also reinforce superstition.

Is it Pagan to be Happy?

President Hyde, of Bowdoin College, in his extremely stimulating volume, *From Epicurus to Christ*, shows clearly the truth which lies in the four great systems of Greek philosophy, and even more clearly how in Christianity these various excellences are preserved, correlated, and made practical. One sentence of the book is worth quoting: "Mill, Spencer, and others have endeavored to graft the altruistic truths of Christianity on to that of the old Epicurean stock. . . . Christianity includes everything of value in Epicureanism and infinitely more. It has the Epicurean greatness without its exclusiveness; its joy without its selfishness; its naturalness without its baseness; its geniality without its heartlessness." This conjunction of Christianity and Epicureanism may shock some good people. Thanks to a great variety of circumstances, it is very difficult for many of us to feel that for most Christians duty lies along the pleasing way. A conscientious person face to face with a conflict of duties feels a little more sure of himself if he chooses the one that is disagreeable. But a moment's thought will convince anyone that such estimates are an insult to the divine Will. The chief end of life is not to be miserable. Innocent enjoyments are as open to living Christians as they were to dead pagans. The finest Christians are those who do not permit the sense of duty to cloud life, and who are able to see God's fatherliness where Jesus himself saw it—in the simple joys of social life, in parental love, and in nature. He is a poor child of God who thinks that his Father would rather have him cry than smile.